

DC For Democracy

SUPPORT FOR A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION IN IRAQ To Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton:

A Proposal for Success and Peace in Iraq

A New Mission

To solve our nation's predicament in Iraq, Congress must articulate a new mission in the form of a joint resolution that we hope Congresswoman Norton will introduce. This mission is the establishment of a sovereign, stable, and legitimate Iraqi government that is broadly acceptable to all major groups in Iraq.

President Bush and the US military can rightly take credit for one accomplishment: they succeeded in overthrowing a dictator who had created great instability in the Persian Gulf and imposed a ruthless regime on the Iraqi people. The destruction of that regime has created a very different problem for the US, which now calls for a very different mission.

President Bush's speech today shows that he fails to understand our current mission in Iraq. He defines that mission as establishing democracy and waging war against al Qaeda terrorists. In contrast, Democratic leaders such as Senators Biden, Kerry, and Obama in their recent speeches have recognized that electoral democracy under a continued US occupation cannot prevent Iraq's continued disintegration, and that it is disintegration, more than anything else, that makes a terrorist takeover likely. The best protection against a terrorist takeover is a strong and legitimate Iraqi government.

Such a government cannot be achieved solely through the ballot box. Constitutional democracy alone has not ensured the participation and cooperation of the disgruntled Sunnis and Baathists. On the other hand, a political agreement obtained through consensus can produce a stable, sovereign, and legitimate government that is broadly acceptable to all major sectors of Iraqi society. In the absence of such an agreement, the continued training of Iraqi security forces by the US military simply ensures a more bloody and destructive internal conflict.

The mission to form a sovereign, stable, and legitimate Iraqi government is a political and diplomatic challenge requiring the highest commitment from our leading foreign policy experts. The continued presence of US troops in Iraq endangers this mission, by undermining the sovereignty of the Iraqi government. Recently, Iraqi leaders issued a statement in Cairo declaring their desire for the withdrawal of US troops. They do so in the belief that a US withdrawal is in Iraq's national interest.

It is vital that Congress advocates for a US troop withdrawal, not as an end in itself, but as a means to strengthen the newly established Iraqi government, which is our best hope of preventing Iraq from becoming a base for global terrorism.

A Winning Campaign

Once the new resolution is proposed by Congresswoman Norton, we must campaign for it, or else it will languish in committee, as so many resolutions have done to date. One way to circumvent the House Republican leadership is through a discharge petition.

To obtain the necessary votes for this resolution to actually pass, we call on Congresswoman Norton to establish a Task Force out of her office, in order to:

- obtain the support of the "Out of Iraq" caucus and other Congressional allies,
- establish and coordinate state-level committees tasked with mobilizing voters and lobbying House members, and

A Winning Resolution

Existing resolutions that advocate troop withdrawals for their own sake will fail to gain the support of a majority of the American public, because they appear to advocate surrender. We call on Congresswoman Norton to author a resolution that clearly establishes the primacy of the political mission, and calls for orderly troop withdrawals as a necessary step in that mission. It should be a binding resolution that includes the following:

• Points to our success in bringing Saddam Hussein to trial, ending the Iraqi military threat to its neighbors, and organizing elections leading to an independent, internationally-recognized democratic state in Iraq,

• Clearly establishes the political nature of the entire US initiative in Iraq by transferring all operations, including military, from the Department of Defense to the Secretary of State and renouncing permanent military bases. The DOD was wrong on the number of troops needed, wrong on their reception, not there on post combat plans, was unable to

bring about large scale reconstruction, continues to be unrealistic about the course of the war, and continues to reject the need to get out. The State Department will do a better job in bringing about a diplomatic solution. Putting Iraq under the control of State will also send an encouraging signal to the world that we have become more flexible.

- Establishes a multinational program, under the leadership of select Muslim nations, to train Iraqi security and police forces. Moslem countries have a vested interest in quieting the area. If they resist participating we can win their cooperation with money, arms, favorable trade agreements, or political support.

- Reassigns reconstruction projects from multinational corporations to Iraqi firms, and provide logistical and financial support for adequate troop protection to guarantee their success.

- Identifies and supports Iraqi institutions, both inside and outside government, that will advance human rights, guarding against the re-establishment of a repressive regime.

- Ends our military mission in Iraq, by establishing a plan for the orderly withdrawal of US troops to be completed by December 15, 2006, one year after the planned election. Since we are the cause of much of the unrest, the faster we get out, the sooner it will cease. A timetable is necessary for this alternate strategy to have meaningful political impact. A timetable would also clearly distinguish this approach from the Administration's

Congresswoman Norton, let us urge you to give focus to the concerns of the people at this meeting by organizing them into a force to lobby and otherwise assist in passing such a resolution. Submitted by Mike Shor, (Ombudsman, DC for Democracy) and Keshini Ladduwahetty (Steering Committee member, DC for Democracy)
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